



# LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

*Celebrating 25 Years of Advocacy & Achievement*

## COMMISSIONERS

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Sandra Rudnick  
Adelina Sorkin, LCSW/ACSW  
Martha Trevino Powell  
Dr. Harriette F. Williams

## APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **June 7, 2010**, in Room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim accounting or transcription of events at this meeting.**

### COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Carol O. Biondi	Steven M. Olivas, Esq.
Patricia Curry	Dr. Maria A. Prieto
Ann Franzen	Sandra Rudnick
Helen A. Kleinberg	Stacey Savelle
Dr. La-Doris McClaney	Martha Trevino Powell
Rev. Cecil L. Murray	

### COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Susan F. Friedman	Dr. Harriette F. Williams
Adelina Sorkin, LCSW/ACSW	

## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Curry at 10:07 a.m.

## **II. INTRODUCTIONS**

Self introductions were made.

## **III. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

- **June 7, 2010**

### Action Taken:

On motion of Commissioner Prieto, seconded by Commissioner Kleinberg (Commissioners Friedman, Sorkin and Williams being absent), the agenda for June 7, 2010, was unanimously approved. Chair Curry noted that Item VI (*Motion by Commissioner Curry to Approve a Letter to the Board of Supervisors regarding Youth Permanency*) will be continued to the meeting of June 21, 2010.

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**IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

- **May 3, 2010**

**Action Taken:**

On motion of Commissioner Savelle, seconded by Commissioner Kleinberg (Commissioners Friedman, Sorkin and Williams being absent), the minutes for May 3, 2010, were unanimously approved as submitted ([copy on file](#)).

**V. CHAIR'S REPORT**

Chair Curry reported the following:

- The Commission will continue to work on preparing the 2009-10 Commission Annual Report. An outline of the report was provided to the Commission by Mr. Don Ashton, Deputy Executive Officer. Chair Curry requested that each Committee Chair and Ad-Hoc Committee member summarize individual reports to be included in the Annual Report.

Commissioner Sandra Rudnick will prepare the report for the "Prevention" work group who meets regularly; Commissioner Franzen will prepare the report for the "Healthy Lifestyle Trainings" that was conducted collaboratively by the Childhood Wellness, Faith-Based, and Relative Care Committees.

- The Seventh Annual California Conference on Childhood Grief & Traumatic Loss will take place on March 23, 2011, at the Pasadena Convention Center. Copy of event flyer was received and filed ([copy on file](#)). Commissioners interested in attending the event may contact Commission staff for information.

**Action taken:**

Chair Curry's verbal report was received and filed.

**VI. MOTION BY COMMISSIONER CURRY TO APPROVE A LETTER TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REGARDING YOUTH PERMANENCY**

**Action Taken:**

This item was continued to the meeting of June 21, 2010.

**VII. PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS**

- a. Update on the Title IV-E Waiver                      Director Trish Ploehn, DCFS**

Ms. Lisa Parrish, Representing the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), reported the following:

- DCFS is in its third year of the Title IV-E Waiver (Waiver) with two years remaining. DCFS has generated reinvestment dollars under this capped allocation, and has compiled a list of different initiative investments for consideration during the third year of the Waiver. However, due to the wavering State Budget and proposed cuts, some of the initiative projects planned for the third year of the Waiver were not implemented.
- Group home rate increases will cost DCFS \$33 million for the remainder of 2010, and \$66 million every year, thereafter. Unfortunately, the rate increases have negated many of the reinvestment projects that were originally planned during the third year. The federal allotment for the rate increases is approximately \$20 million.
- Ms. Cynthia McCoy Miller, Mr. Dave Mitchell, and Ms. Parrish were in Washington D.C. during the first week of June 2010, for the Annual Waiver Demonstration Project. DCFS has submitted a request to the Federal Government for a raise of its capped Waiver allocation to compensate for the Group Home Rate increases, and is optimistic that this request for additional funding will be approved.
- Under the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), several States received the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) adjustment which added stimulus funds through various mechanisms. This adjustment has set a precedent and increased the probability for adjustments to the capped allocations. If the Federal Government raises DCFS' capped Waiver allocation, approximately \$45 million dollars, over a two-year period, will be available for reinvestment.
- Since January 2010, DCFS has been collaborating with the Foster Family Agencies (FFA) to design an FFA after care project. DCFS is also interested in extending Permanency Units, enhancing safety for children, and reducing the case loads for Emergency Response investigative Children's Social Workers (CSW's).
- The proposed Waiver Plan submitted by DCFS included 23 areas which DCFS identified as needing improvement; based on available funding, projects identified in the Plan will be implemented.
- It is estimated that DCFS will receive approximately \$20-\$25 million of reinvestment dollars. DCFS has not made a determination on what projects will be funded with Waiver dollars, and plans to discuss options with stakeholders.

In response to questions posed by the Commission, Ms. Parrish added the following:

- DCFS' target for CSW caseload is 14 referrals per month per investigator, and 24 children for the back end CSW. Unfortunately, DCFS has not reached this target yet, and in order to do so, will require a substantial increase in staff.
- Currently, in an effort to reduce CSW caseload without hiring new staff; DCFS has redeployed and reassigned staff. In addition, DCFS is considering hiring 80-120 new CSW's. DCFS anticipates that the cost of the new hires would account for most of the reinvestment funds. Ms. Maryam Fatemi, DCFS, added that during the first phase, DCFS redeployed approximately 40+ CSW's, and reassigned approximately 100 CSW's, from other divisions such as Permanency Partners Program (P3), to assist with Emergency Response (ER) front end investigative duties; reassigned CSW's will work through the end of summer 2010. During the second phase, approximately 70+ were redeployed.

An evaluation will be conducted at the end of the summer to assess the success of the reassignments/redeployments and determine whether the ER CSW caseloads have decreased, especially all referrals that had gone past the 30 day requirement.

- DCFS, with the support of the CEO, has fully funded its prevention efforts for the remainder of 2010.
- In an effort to ease CSW's who are reluctant to releasing children back into their homes, DCFS has placed an emphasis on Team Decision Making (TDM) to ensure that a group of experts make the best decision for the child and that no one individual is making a recommendation alone.

Chair Curry reported on a recent meeting with Director Ploehn, at which the redeployment and reassignment of CSW's was discussed. Commissioners expressed concern that a substantial amount of resources is being allocated to the front-end of DCFS, while back-end is being redeveloped. They also noted that because the majority of youth in group homes is 13 to 18 years old, if DCFS focused on finding permanent homes for this age group, it would not only benefit the youth, but would also decrease the costs of group homes and generate a substantial savings for the Department.

**Action Taken:**

After discussion, the Commission received and filed the verbal Title IV-E Waiver Update provided by Ms. Lisa Parrish, DCFS.

**b. Roundtable Discussion on the Title IV-E Waiver and Related Children Services Programs**

**Chair/Stakeholders**

The roundtable discussion on the Title IV-E Waiver and related children services programs included reports by Ms. Bonnie Armstrong, Casey Family Programs, Ms. Sharon Harada, Chief of Juvenile Field Services Bureau, Mr. Dave Mitchell, Chief of Placement Services Bureau, Ms. Sharon Watson, Ph.D, Ms. Maryam Fatemi, Deputy Director DCFS, and Mr. Joseph Devall, President of the Community Coalition.

The Discussion focused on the following key points: Prevention, Crossover, Title IV-E, Relative Care, Fatalities/ER, Data, Education and Mental Health.

**Maryam Fatemi, DCFS**

- DCFS and the community as a whole need to focus on preventing youth from “crossing over.” For the last decade, every month, approximately one hundred youth go through a 241.1 assessment process between Probation and DCFS.
- An analysis of youth cited by Traffic Courts is currently being conducted. The analysis includes a comprehensive review of the child’s education component, family functioning, and group home or public home status. This comprehensive assessment will be used to determine the level and type of service that a particular child will receive in an effort to prevent them from crossing over to Probation.

**Sharon Watson, Ph.D,**

**Past Director of the Education Coordinating Council (ECC)**

- Based on previous experiences, the trouble spots for youths occur during transitions. Therefore, the initial transition in which a youth is leaving their home and coming into the system is key. Additionally, transitions from DCFS to Probation also play an important role. Another significant transition occurs when youth leave the system and go back into the community. Special emphasis should be placed when these transitions occur to make them as painless and as healthy as possible for the youth.
- Prevention and Permanency play a significant role for preventing youth from entering a 241.1 status. Consequently, Relative Care and Education are an important component of Permanency, and the overlying theme is that all of these key points are linked and each plays a vital role in the overall wellness of the youth.

**Dave Mitchell, Probation**

- Due to the Group Home rate increase, Probation will most likely not realize any savings this year; more than half of youth in group homes are Probation youth.

- Probation has been successful in the overarching framework approach, and in implementing its practice model. It starts with gathering information and assessing youth in DCFS in order to make appropriate recommendations or interventions.
- Probation's tentative practice model states that the best place for youth to grow up, is in their home. Therefore, Probation makes a concerted effort to assess and strengthen the family of the youth prior to returning the youth home. However, because in many instances the youth's home is found to be inappropriate placement, the youth is referred to placement.
- Probation is working in collaboration with DCFS to develop a Practice Model (Model) for crossover youth. The Department is also collaborating with Judges Nash and Groman who are especially interested in the Model. Probation has begun training on the Model for thirty supervisors, who will in turn gain expertise and have the ability to train other staff.

**Sharon Harada, Probation**

- Supervisors have been involved in developing the Model, and will subsequently be involved in training their staff. The Department goal is that the Model will bring consistency across systems and to the Department as a whole.
- The Model was recently expanded to cover all bureaus within Probation, and as a result, shifted practice across the board. Staff operating in the Probation camps realize and understand the impact the Model has had on their processes.

Ms. Harada agreed to provide the Commission with a summary of the actions taken by the Department since the implementation of the Practice Model.

**Bonnie Armstrong, Casey Family Programs**

- There has been much dialogue regarding Title IV-E Waiver funds and what has been done with reinvestment funds. However, it is important to note that the Model evolved around the Title IV-E Waiver for eligible youth (in Group Homes). Outcomes are difficult to identify because the focus is only on eligible youth and does not include all others in the system.

**Joseph Devall, Community Coalition**

- Caregivers have noted difficulty in dealing with and addressing behaviors that youth experience while transitioning into adolescence as caregivers do not have the tools or resources to address the behaviors or needs exhibited by youths.
- The Community Coalition has been working with the caregivers in an effort to address the mental health needs of youths through advocacy.

Mr. Devall, who often has interaction with caregivers who have experienced DCFS, DMH and Probation, described a case study in which a caregiver who adopted three young boys was unable to take one back because of the limited resources she had in dealing with one of the boys who had crossed over. She ultimately was levied with a charge of abandonment by the court because she refused to take the youth back.

During discussion, the Commission and Stakeholders highlighted the following:

- The probability of an overarching Practice Model that would generate a connection between the various Departments that service minors resulting in better integration and delivery of services for children and families.
- Funding for Permanency is needed in order to decrease the cost of group home placements.
- At risk youth need family, safety, education, and mental health services as they are critical to the wellbeing of youth and families.
- Although the focus has been the child, supporting the family or relative caring for a child is also important.
- Crossover work done by the Probation Department is an example of progress, however only a small number of youth (1300 out of 20,000) receive resources.
- A large percentage of children and family agencies in the Country, unlike the County, have dependency and delinquency under Child Welfare thereby facilitating support and enhancing delivery of resources.
- Communicating with youth is important; oftentimes decisions are made for a child without consulting with them.

- Although the idea of separating Probation youth from adults has not been well received, a recommendation can be made to the Board of Supervisors to hire an additional Chief Deputy at the Probation Department – one solely dedicated to service youth and the other to oversee adult probation services.
- The creation of teams within DCFS and Probation that focus on at risk youth. The teams would address all areas, including Social Work, Probation, Mental Health, and Education.
- Developing strategies in which different departments can come together and work in conjunction with one another.
- \$2.5 million for Prevention is not a significant amount of funding. Perhaps there is a way to bring in other Departments which can increase the amount available for Prevention funding.
- The possibility of developing a Desk Guide Model to be used by all agencies servicing children, at risk youth and families.

The Commission is considering including the Desk Guides approach and the Practice Model as recommendations in its Annual Report to the Board of Supervisors.

**Action Taken:**

After discussion, the Commission received and filed the verbal report provided by stakeholders. In addition, DCFS and Probation agreed to provide the Commission with their respective Practice Models.

**VIII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

There was none.

**IX. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was none.

**X. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There was none.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Curry at 11:55 a.m.